

**Statement of
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Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, & Mining
S. 1971, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.1971, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. The bill would add six new areas totaling 6,320 acres to the California Coastal National Monument. The Department of the Interior supports S. 1971, and would also like to work with the sponsor and the Committee to address certain technical issues in the bill.

Background

The California coast is rugged and spectacular, representing one of the nation's most iconic and treasured landscapes. Millions of visitors travel up and down the California coast each year, stopping at coastal towns and vista points to experience breathtaking views and spectacular scenery and to observe an abundance of wildlife along the coast. In 2000, Presidential Proclamation 7264 established the California Coastal National Monument, administered by the Bureau of Land Management and comprising over 20,000 islands, rocks, and pinnacles along the 1,100 mile California coast. In 2014, Presidential Proclamation 9089 expanded the Monument by adding the Point Arena-Stornetta unit, which represented the Monument's first onshore unit, providing a mainland base for access and interpretation of the monument and enhancing the public's enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of the California Coastal National Monument.

Since the expansion of the boundary, many California coastal communities have built grassroots networks including businesses, environmental groups, members of the public, and other non-governmental organizations that support the protection of additional lands along the coast as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Lost Coast Headlands, the Coast Dairies Public Lands, Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, and the Orange County Rocks and Islands are valued by nearby Coastal communities for their scenic, conservation and recreation values, and each of these areas contains nationally significant historical, cultural, natural, and scientific resources.

Trinidad Head is a 60-acre rocky promontory surrounded by sea stacks in the Trinidad Harbor. The large and dominant coastal head is bordered by sheer cliffs that are often battered by strong winter storms, and the area is culturally and spiritually significant to the Native American communities of the Yurok, Tsurai, and Trinidad Rancheria. Thirteen acres on Trinidad Head, including the historic Trinidad Head Light Station, are managed by the BLM, and are used for scientific research and recreational activities. The BLM is working with community partners to develop a management plan for the area that will address public access, conservation, and recreation goals.

Lighthouse Ranch, twelve miles south of Eureka, overlooks the Eel River Delta, the South Spit of Humboldt Bay, and the Pacific Ocean, offering stunning views of the coastline. The eight-acre parcel administered by the BLM is managed for conservation and recreation, including

picnicking, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The BLM also manages 600 nearby acres under a conservation easement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Lost Coast Headlands, located about 25 miles south of Eureka, comprise about 440 acres of BLM-managed public lands. These lands offer traditional grazing uses and recreational opportunities for hikers, horseback riders, cyclists, birdwatchers, and beachgoers. The headlands feature rolling hills, windswept coastal bluffs, and narrow beaches, and provide important habitat for a variety of bird, mammal and fish species.

The Coast Dairies Public Lands, located near Davenport in Santa Cruz County, represent one of the last areas in the coastal foothills that is available to the public. The BLM manages 5,840 acres of public land in the area, which includes perennial streams lined with coast redwoods and riparian corridors. The area is also home to rare fish and wildlife species such as the California red-legged frog, Coho salmon, and Central California Coast steelhead. The Cotoni-Coast Dairies area is also culturally and historically significant to many groups of Native American people who have lived here over the past several centuries. Today, these lands are managed for conservation of native coastal wildlife and habitats, the reclamation and remediation of facilities associated with a former concrete quarry, grazing, and recreational public uses.

The Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, located six miles from the historic Hearst Castle in San Luis Obispo County on State Scenic Highway One, includes 20 acres of public lands that are part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands. The Piedras Blancas Light Station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, began operation in 1875 and is still used today to aid marine navigation. The Light Station is named for the distinctive white rocks that loom just offshore. These rocks, and the rugged shoreline, are home to seabirds, sea lions, and elephant seals. Over 70 native plant species can be found on the habitat surrounding the Light Station. In addition, the Light Station is also an important area for scientific studies of whales, seals, and sea otters; seabirds; tide pools; and seismicity. The area provides excellent opportunities for visitors to enjoy wildlife observation, hiking, picnicking, nature study, tide-pool walks, and guided tours of the Light Station.

The Orange County Rocks and Islands are designated under legislative withdrawals to the U.S. Coast Guard for lighthouse construction and navigation. Because of the withdrawals, these rocks were not incorporated as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. Nonetheless, the rocks contain unique geologic formations and support coastal wildlife. Because the Coast Guard no longer requires the use of these rocks and small islands for navigation purposes, local stakeholders propose to have the withdrawal removed and the rocks and islands incorporated as a unit of California Coastal National Monument.

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S. 1971 would expand the boundary of the California Coastal National Monument to include Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Lost Coast Headlands, the Coast Dairies Public Lands, and Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area. These five areas represent a total of approximately 6,320 acres of BLM-managed public lands located along the California coast. The bill would also remove the lighthouse reservation on the Orange County Rocks and Islands and be administered as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. The bill would authorize these units to be managed in accordance with the two Presidential Proclamations that established and expanded the Monument.

Each of the National Monuments and National Conservation Areas designated by Congress and managed by the BLM is unique. However, all of these designations have certain critical elements in common, including withdrawal from the public land, mining, and mineral leasing laws; OHV use limitations; and language that charges the Secretary of the Interior with allowing only those uses that further the purposes for which the area is established. The designations in S. 1971 are consistent with these principles and we support their designation. The addition of new units of the California Coastal National Monument will help strengthen and expand partnerships with California coastal communities, and provide opportunities for stewardship of coastal resources, interpretation, environmental education and other volunteer activities. In addition, visitors will experience and learn about the Monument and its natural and cultural resources. The proposed expansion of the Monument is consistent with the BLM's resource management goals and the purposes of the Proclamations.

Under the bill, the Secretary, through the BLM, will be required to develop or amend the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for areas to be added to the Monument. Specifically, the bill requires that the BLM develop an RMP "for the long-term protection and management of the Federal land added to the Monument" as well as to address visitation and recreation by the public, along with other permitted and public uses. The bill further provides for continuation or development of cooperative agreements with state and local governments, tribes, environmental groups, and stewardship organizations. The BLM values and appreciates working closely with partners and looks forward to continuing to work with local government agencies and organizations on the management of these important areas.

The bill will provide protection of Native American sacred sites, as well as manage access for traditional customary uses. The Monument additions will also provide for the establishment of an advisory council or the use of existing advisory bodies for each unit to provide input for development of RMP amendments. The BLM recognizes the importance of fostering positive working relationships with adjacent private landowners and other stakeholders, and we welcome the opportunity to work together with all stakeholders to effectively manage the additions to the California Coastal National Monument.

Finally, the BLM would like to work with the sponsor to address a few technical issues related to grazing, the management plan, the legal status of the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, and the structure and sunset for advisory councils.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior appreciates Senator Boxer's work with local communities to develop this legislation. We support the legislation and look forward to working with the sponsor and the Committee to address certain technical issues.